



Facultade de Filoloxía

**MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN:  
AMERICAN IDENTITY  
THROUGH ITS TEXTS.**

**GRAO EN LINGUA E LITERATURA INGLESAS**

**CURSO 2018/2019**

**Alumno:** Mario Alonso Cascallana

**Titora:** Patricia Fra López



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CUBRIR ESTE FORMULARIO ELECTRONICAMENTE

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#### **Make America Great Again: American identity through its texts.**

The interest on this topic comes from a personal experience. While I was living in Arkansas, Donald Trump was elected as the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. The recurrent slogan through his campaign, Make America Great Again, made me question what the true essence of the American identity is, as well as the foundations, goals and rights this country truly defends.

In order to really find out what the American identity is, I will analyse different texts from the colonial times, such as John Winthrop's sermon *A Model of Christian Charity*, *Letters from an American Farmer* by John de Crevecoeur, some texts written by the Founding Fathers as the *Declaration of Independence*, and others. The final step in the present essay will be to connect these texts and ideas to Trump's discourse, in a comparative analysis centred on the "true" American identity.

Hence, the ultimate goal of this essay is to analyse the "Make America Great Again" speech as a genuinely American product, trying to find out whether Trump's discourse shares some parallelism to the United States' founding documents.

Santiago de Compostela, 6 de novembro de 2018.

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## Introduction

The 2016 United States presidential election shocked many people around the world. Donald Trump, a businessman and reality television celebrity became the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States representing the Republican Party. The current president of the United States promised to bring back a regeneration of the country, the pivotal element of his famous speech “Make America Great Again”.

At the election’s time I was studying in a College located in Batesville, Arkansas, which is regarded as one of the most conservative states in America. Despite living in such a small community (it has a population of around 6,000 people and there were only circa 650 students at the University) I had the opportunity to meet people from many diverse backgrounds, countries and ethnicities. The highly cross-cultural environment that I experienced there, did not seem to respond to, or at least to me, to Trump’s figure and discourse. This intrigued me and made me wonder which foundations and ideas lie behind the genesis of this country and the true essence of the American identity. As the French immigrant writer, called Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, asked himself more than two centuries ago, I formulated once again the seminal question “What then is an American, this new man?”.

However, this “new man” that is American is not an easy concept to define. According to Tells-Morse, the level of commitment towards your nation and the setting group boundaries, which states “who is fully in the group and who is not” (4) are basic to understand which specific individual fits in a particular society. American stereotypes are based on an essentialist view that “sees these characteristics as permanent, as essential to the definition to the group” (Skinner 279). Nevertheless, the multiculturalism of the American society entails a set of distinctive spiritual, intellectual and racial traits. What are then the main characteristics which coincide with the American individual?

In order to find out the answer, I will analyse the origin and foundations that set in motion the United States as a nation and the American individual. By analysing different texts and connecting them with Trump, I hope to either identify the president as a contemporary reflection of those old values, or to discover a new ideological trend in American society. For this purpose, I will focus on certain pivotal texts that triggered defining aspects of the American nation and its individuals. By doing so, I attempt to

connect them with Trump's discourse and ideology and understand what he really means by praising that "Glorious, Traditional America" as well as the individuals that identify with it. The final aim is to untangle the dilemma that has captivated me since the 2016 United States election; whether Donald Trump is a spontaneous, anomalous irruption or a real portrayal of the traditional identity of the United States that the boosters of the Nation planned to lead and represent.

In order to do so, I will divide the essay into three main sections. The first unit will deal with the Puritan mission. Then, I will explore the figure of the White-Anglo Saxon Protestant. Finally, I will tackle the American Revolution and consequent Declaration of Independence. The first two sections will be related to Trump in order to find the existence, if any, of an ideological similitude. In the last section, I will describe the beginnings of the American Nation, linked to the American Revolution, understood as a process that was needed in order to uphold the privileges of a particular social group. Once established my methodology, I want to define these different sections and their particular objects of study more precisely.

The first section centres on the establishment of the Puritan evangelizing mission and an iconic text that have come to be part of American consciousness: "A Model of Christian Charity", the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Puritan sermon delivered by John Winthrop. However, the impact Puritan colonies have had on America goes far beyond religious issues, and the sermon and the influence of Puritanism have become a turning point in order to understand American 21<sup>st</sup> Century reality.

The second chapter orbits around the figure of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Man, commonly known as WASP. The study of this individual will provide a better understanding of the American individual. I will focus on the influence of "Observation Concerning the Increase of Mankind" by Benjamin Franklin in order to analyse the WASP consolidation and whether Trump bears some relationship to this social group.

Then, I will explore the American struggle for independence, as a conflict that triggered the endorsement of the United States and an identity integration inherent to this nation. The pivotal text analysed in this section is the Declaration of Independence, by Thomas Jefferson. This text became a fundamental turning point determining American's fate, which sought independence from the British Empire and outlined a set of inalienable rights inherent to the American individual.

The selection of these texts has not been arbitrary. It responds to a sequence of events, in chronological order, which allows us to understand the consolidation of a particular American identity. Through an analysis of the aforementioned texts, I intend to find out whether Trump does really portray the desired identity set to be displayed by the creators of the United States. Since this idea came up to my mind as a possible Final Degree Project, I have tried to resolve those doubts that assailed me on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016.



# 1. The Puritan Mission

When King Henry VIII became King of England in 1509, he was a fervent catholic. Indeed, Pope Leo X granted him with the title “Defender of the Faith”. Nevertheless, political needs would test his devoted loyalty towards Catholicism. He wanted a male heir<sup>1</sup> but his first marriage with Catherine of Aragon had been unable to give him one. Henry’s need for a son, fearing a war of succession, caused him to try and divorce Catherine. However, divorce was not allowed in the Catholic faith and Pope Clement VII disallowed this annulment. The denial led Henry to break with the same Catholic Church he had passionately defended. In 1530 he established the Anglican Church of England, emerging as the supreme Head of the Church. This new Church of England introduced some ideas of the Reformation; “Firstly, faith became more important than works. Secondly, many of the traditional sacraments were rejected. And thirdly, the church authority was decentralized” (Berghe 14).

However, some members considered that the Anglican Protestant Church still remained very close to the traditional Catholic doctrine. Consequently, by 1600, these dissenters adopted the teachings of John Calvin, a major leader of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. This is when Puritanism first emerged. They condemned the Catholic Church as a “false church,” urging a revolutionary change in order to “purify the church and make it simpler.” (“Puritans of Massachusetts: Theocracy or Democracy”, 1). Among their main emendations were the strong opposition towards indulgences, which gave the wealthier people the opportunity to buy salvation from the church, widening the gap between classes and replacing God’s position as the only that could forgive people’s sins. Puritans also rejected the “doctrine of works”, which stated that the way you act affects your fate. Instead, Puritans strongly supported the covenant of grace, which meant that salvation ultimately depended on God’s grace rather than on your actions (Berghe 14). Paradoxically, they defended that you could “activate” your faith. The doctrine of Preparationism suggested “that there were steps one could take to get in a proper frame of mind so that one could be fully receptive to sanctification if it were forthcoming” (Berghe 15)

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<sup>1</sup> His marriage with Catherine of Aragon had resulted in a succession war.

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the Puritans were increasingly concerned about the false beliefs of the Catholic Church. They feared that the religious malpractice of Catholic believers could end up in an act of divine punishment over England. Besides, violence had become commonplace during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and both Catholics and Protestants were being persecuted depending on the religious inclination of the King<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, in 1620, 102 dissenters, among them 35 Puritans, emigrated to a “New Holy Land”, establishing in North America. Once there, these Puritans could obey God according to their vision, erecting a covenant community, a society pledged to obey God’s laws. These groups of Puritans came to be called the Pilgrim Fathers, who had escaped England, seeking for a new land that would offer them the religious freedom they were longing for.

However, “the Puritan religious mission [...] was largely unfulfilled. Nevertheless, they developed important political and legal ideas that contributed to the founding of the United States more than a century later” (“Puritans of Massachusetts: Theocracy or Democracy” 5). The Puritan community grew large in population beyond New England limits, and the appearance of dissident groups within the Puritans (Quakers, Antinomians, Baptists) triggered the final disintegration of the Puritan community. In spite of the fact that Puritanism as a political entity disappeared after the 17<sup>th</sup> century, its impact upon American society is still present:

So, to Americans, Puritanism is not only a religious belief, but a philosophy, a combination of lifestyles with living values. It has exerted great influence on American culture, and shaped the national characters of American people (Kang 149).

Alan Simpson illustrates this, stating that “everyone who inspects the national consciousness of Englishmen and Americans today finds Puritanism a part of its makeup” (199). Right at this point, Ning Kang’s essay “Puritanism and its Impact upon American Values” deserves a special mention. Her dissertation portrays defining elements that are essential to understand American identity. These tenets have become cornerstones for the American society as well as its individuals. His vision on this topic was enlightening, becoming a reliable reference to recur to. Her essay allowed me to examine the impact different Puritan trends has on contemporary American tenets with

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<sup>2</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries witnessed in England a period of multiple disputes and violent religious intolerance between the branches of Catholicism and Protestantism. For more interest on this issue, check “Religion and the rise of liberal-democratic ideology in 17th-Century”, by David Zaret.

great precision, as described below. The list provided below corresponds to my personal selection of concepts that are found in Kang's paper, examining the principles that play the biggest role in my research <sup>3</sup>.

## 1.1 The influence of Puritanism on American values

### American Individualism

American Individualism Culture is one of the main values that help us understand American identity. When the Puritan dissenters separated from Catholic rules, they established salvation as a personal and spiritual pursuit (Preparationism). To do so, the Puritans rejected the Pope's Authority, as an attempt to establish a direct connection between God and man. In this sense, the Puritans hold certain freedom and independence by stressing an anti-authority and religious autonomy.

This personal religious perspective had a crucial impact on the individual, and according to Ning Kang, "anti-authority and their strong self-awareness paved the way for the development of individualism in colonial America, and later becoming one of the most important values of American people" (17). The possibility of a personal spiritual success led Americans to an economic and social independence desire. American religious emancipation helped to develop the individual long for social and economic self-sufficiency. This is explained by Dana Becker and Jeane Marecek, who state that:

American roots are evident in its persistent though unacknowledged attachment to an American inspired brand of individualism. That attachment is evident in the movement's endorsement of self-fulfillment as the ultimate life goal, its promotion of self-improvement via personal effort, and its narrow sense of the social (1767).

The importance of a strong sense of the self reinforced the figure of the individual, strengthening which paved people's way to happiness.

### American Democracy

The Mayflower Compact, the first governing document of Plymouth Colony, is commonly said to have sowed the seeds of the early American Democracy. This expedition attempted to establish a temporary government until it would obtain the right

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on this issue, read Ning Kang "Puritanism and its Impact upon American Values", where she also talks about Puritan's effects on education and literacy.

to govern themselves in New England. This way, The Puritans established a covenant community, pledged to obey God's Law, with a General Court administered by John Winthrop. During the meetings every church member could speak, and decisions were made by majority rule, since both the assistants and deputies needed each other's consent for a law to pass.

However, it is crucial to understand that this expedition was escaping from religious, economic and political oppression. These Puritans wanted to build a society that would differ from the tyrannical powers present in Europe, building an antimonarchical and secular society, despite having a religious facet. This alleged inconsistency lies on Puritan's belief of a separation between church and state, but not a separation of the state from God. The American Puritan heritage was clear, and the Founding Fathers saw Christianity as the default religion in America. However, some may find this a paradox, considering Thomas Jefferson's views on "separation of church and state" (Konvitz 52). However, Jefferson did not mention any separation between "religion and state". Puritans believed that American society must be inexorably linked to God, since Puritan religious and moral foundations are the base of the American society. Jefferson words selection between church and religion was crucial, "implying that he did not mean to proscribe all interaction between religion and the state" (Dreisbach 183).

This first Political exercise performed by the Puritans was essential to understand the pivotal role of religion in American politics. Despite religion was not strictly regularized as inherent part of the political system, its spiritual character was indisputable. This dichotomy not only asserted religion as an implicit component within institutional domains, but also hampered its eradication. Were these early forms of Government a real democracy, or a theocracy, a system of government dominated by religious leaders?

#### American national character- wealth and hard work

Once Puritans set their belief in Predestination, they asserted that salvation could be revealed through success in life, linking material wealth with God's favour. This way, God permits an individual to be wealthy due to man's virtue, showing the Creator's grace to Mankind. This assumption underlines that change ultimately depends on the individual and its own initiative to bring about change, obtaining by *motu proprio* upwards economic

mobility. This idea sharply contrasted with the rigid (social and economically) class system present in Europe, which barely allowed flow between classes.

Benjamin Franklin, political leader who is considered one of the Founding Fathers, was a key figure implanting the commonplace idea in America that holds that “work dignifies man”. In his essay “Observation concerning the increase of mankind”, Franklin encourages every American inhabitant to work hard, linking individual success to communal prosperity. Nowadays, this capitalist approach is part of American national character, and as stated by Kang “To most Americans, material achievements are the mark of one’s success, the manifestation of their personal values, and the symbol of one’s independence” (150).

#### American people’s strong sense of mission

The Puritans who had arrived on America escaping religious persecution, considered themselves God’s chosen people in a mission set to establish a settlement in a new “land of hope” where they could pursue their religious ideals and construct a New Jerusalem. As stated by German “With their emphasis on the Christianizing and civilizing mission of the English [...] the Puritans believed that they, as the followers of Christ, were the new chosen people of New Testament” (11).

This propelled the American belief that it is their mission to lead by example, emerging as a beacon for the world for the rest of the nations that must look up to America as the shining example. The Puritan theological mission has helped to create this divine aura of American exceptionalism, which considers that the United States is not just a bigger and more powerful country, but an exception. This ideology, added to a huge economic, military and political power, justifies American current action, “spreading” their sense of democracy and liberty around the globe. This way, America must become a “City Upon a Hill”, which shines as an example for the rest to follow.

“The City Upon a Hill” metaphor was proclaimed by John Winthrop. He is one of the most iconic figures of Puritanism during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. He was one of the pioneers who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony, emerging as their leader and serving as a Governor twelve times. Nevertheless, he is mainly remembered because of the speech he delivered on board the ship *Arbella* on April 8, 1630, on his way to America. This Puritan

sermon, named a Model of Christian Charity, encourages colonists to embrace the Christian ideal of “brotherly affection”, engaging in a community meant to serve as God’s example by succeeding both materially and spiritually, but also warning about the costs of a hypothetical failure achieving so. The “City Upon a Hill” John Winthrop dreamed about has left a significant footprint on American society, culture and politics.

## 1.2 John Winthrop’s “A Model of Christian Charity”

Through his speech, Winthrop laid out why the Puritans had to be successful on its evangelizing mission in North-America, as well as the steps they had to take to achieve so. “A Model of Christian Charity” has become a cornerstone in order to understand American exceptionalism, whose term:

has historically referred to the perception that the United States differs qualitatively from other developed nations, because of its unique origins, national credo, historical evolution, and distinctive political and religious institutions (Koh 1481).

The expedition of the Puritans, leading a religious mission to carry out God’s mission, conferred this divine campaign the marvelous aura from an ethnocentric perspective based on the Puritan individual. Therefore, this sacred providence provided the ideal scenario that would plant the seeds to boost the American exceptionalism, emphasizing that the religious character of the Mayflower Compact was crucial to determine the colonies will:

The Lord will be our God, and delight to dwell among us, as his own people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways. So that we shall see much more of his wisdom, power, goodness and truth, than formerly we have been acquainted with. We shall find that the God of Israel is among us. (Winthrop 27).

This way, the religious expedition set in motion the emergence of a society centred on fulfilling God’s will. According to Winthrop, the mission must succeed because these Puritans represent God’s dream, choosing a spiritual quest which must lead by example since God is on their side. They had been chosen by God to lead this expedition and they had to reward him back. Under this premise the Puritans embarked on a mission to fulfil God’s desire:

We have taken out a commission. The Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles. We have professed to enterprise these and those accounts, upon these and those ends. We have hereupon besought Him of favor and blessing. Now if the Lord shall please to hear us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath he ratified this covenant and sealed our Commission, and will expect a strict performance of the articles contained in it. (Winthrop 27).

Despite believing in Predestination, they thought that they could be worthy of being called for salvation by acting upon biblical principles, prayers and good actions. The Colony must be successful in order to praise the Creator, since the benevolent and generous God has allowed this community to begin a journey on which the individuals must cooperate and work as one. According to the Puritans, the way to do so, is the following;

Now the only way to avoid this shipwreck, and to provide for our posterity, is to follow the counsel of Micah, *to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God*<sup>4</sup>. For this end, we must be knit together, in this work, as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection. We must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of other's necessities. We must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience and liberality. We must delight in each other; make other's conditions our own; rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, as members of the same body (Winthrop 27).

However, if the Puritans failed to fulfil God requirements, they were condemning humanity, since this enterprise was not only performing God's will on the colonies, but in the entire world; "if we shall neglect the observation of these articles which are the ends we have propounded, and, dissembling with our God[...] the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us" (Winthrop 27).

Then, Winthrop proceeds to the section that has become the most famous part of his speech, which exemplifies why the Puritans cannot fail on its mission. They must lead by example since their exceptional character and God's will are on their side, so they should become a source of inspiration to other countries.

For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world. (Winthrop 27).

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<sup>4</sup> Original text shows this sentence in italics.

Nevertheless, when John Winthrop delivered his lecture “A Model of Christian Charity” in 1630, nobody could foresee the long-lasting impact this Puritan sermon would have on American society and politics. Winthrop’s utopia evolved into an experiment that had to build a community that leads by example for the rest of societies. This experiment must demonstrate that the nation is superior and different from the others, thus the United States must play an important role in the world. Therefore, the leaders of the United States must enact by example, supporting this American exceptionalism. This explains why many politicians rely on the ideological influence of this sermon, emphasizes a utopic vision of America that has been embraced and reflected recurrently in the speeches of several of the United States presidents. Although this sermon dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, it neatly represents a contemporary influence political trends, since many figures have recurred to it. I suggest below several figures from different parties and diverse moments in history who have adopted this sermon as part of their motto.

Thomas Paine, considered one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, invoked Winthrop’s “A City Upon a Hill as an image of national purpose. In his pamphlet “Common Sense,” written in 1776, Paine advocated the Independence of the American Colonies, that should emancipate from the British Kingdom, so that an egalitarian government could be created:

The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. Tis not the affair of a city, a country, a province, or a kingdom, but of a continent-- of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe. Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected, even to the end of time, by the proceedings now (12).

In this passage, we can observe how the Colonies’ emancipating endeavour was a global concern that affects human race, since it might have a long-standing impact on society. Through this extract, Paine tries to exalt its readers national fervour by recalling Winthrop’s ethnocentrism, by identifying America’s aim for Independence as a common goal for the entire human race, asserting that:

the cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances hath, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested (Paine 45).



Moving to more recent statements, in 1961 the President-elect John F. Kennedy stated that “The enduring qualities of Massachusetts- the common threads woven by the Pilgrim and the Puritan, the fisherman and the farmer, the Yankee and the immigrant-will not be and could not be forgotten in this nation’s executive mansion” (Kennedy “Address to the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts”). The President declared in the same speech that these tenets could not be obviated, and the nation had to "consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill—the eyes of all people are upon us."

Another politician to quote John Winthrop was the Republican Ronald Reagan in 1980, who served as the 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. During his campaign for the presidency, he quoted this sermon more than once on the campaign trail, asserting that Americans had to be “proud of what for them is still... a shining city on a hill” (Reagan “A Vision for America”) However, this was not an isolated recall to Winthrop’s discourse. In 1989, during his Farewell Address to the Nation, Reagan declared that in his mind the city upon a hill was:

a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity [...]if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here. That’s how I saw it and see it still.

His utopic “city upon a hill” represent a cultural and ethnic diversity. However, this view based on exceptionalism also recalls the importance of the economy in the interests of the community. The walls are “open doors”, pleased to receive people from different races and backgrounds, embracing a multicultural society. However, this laissez-faire migration policy sharply contrasts with Donald Trump’s border walls, which we will analyze later.

This trend kept going on during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Also Barak Obama also drew back to the Puritan Sermon, exemplifying the crucial role both religious dogmas and exceptionalism have on American society. During one speech at the University of Massachusetts Commencement on 2 June 2006, Obama preached the following

in the waters around us, where the American experiment began. As the earliest settlers arrived on the shores of Boston and Salem and Plymouth, they dreamt of building a City Upon a Hill. And the world watched, waiting to see if this improbable idea called America would succeed.

After sketching some political figures that turned to Winthrop's sermon during their career, we shall move on to the protagonist of our essay, Donald Trump. In his own website, he defines himself as "the very definition of the American success story, setting the standards of excellence in his business endeavors, and now, for the United States of America."<sup>5</sup> and the right choice to put "America First, again, restoring our nation's faith, ushering in a bright, new future now and for generations to come." These enlightening quotes evince his Puritan influence. Specifically, Donald Trump has taken up the torch carried by John Winthrop, asserting the roles that exceptionalism, self-determination and religion must play in the American nation.

Donald Trump wants to "awake" America, so the nation can lead by example. To do so, Trump considers that the nation must work independently from external pressures, confirming American supremacy. On January 20, 2017, during his Inaugural Address, he declared that the United States would "seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world – but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first. We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow". As we can observe, Donald Trump also refers to America as a "shining monument" that must be a reference for the world. However, the United States' status has to be a top priority, becoming a territory worthy of admiration and respect for the rest of the world's communities. This isolationist vision of the nation has been developed on the notion of individual primacy. While collective responsibility has a secondary role, American self-determination is built on the notion that the individual has salience over the group. However, this idea of self-determination can be seen not just in the individual but also as inherent to the nation. The United States closely guards its right to act independently from the rest of the World, putting American "interests first".

This takes us to "America First", one of the major slogans during Donald Trump's campaign for the Presidency. When talking about "America first", Trump points out at immigrants as responsible for an economic recession, attributing throughout the campaign the decline of the country to illegal Latina and Latino immigration, which resulted in "a failing U.S. economy, infrastructure and immigration policy" (Huber 223). In his Inaugural Address, he stated that "We must protect our borders from the ravages

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/about/>

of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength”. During the same speech, he declared that the best way to deal with this threatening immigration wave is to follow “two simple rules: Buy American and Hire American. We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world – but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first”

Then, the current “beacon for the world” that America is radiates a light which, despite being designed to be adulated by the rest of the world, does not intend to include everyone in this society. However, this “limited society” is also closely connected with the notion of God, which has always been used to legitimate the progress and the success of the nation. Trump takes up the Puritan mission by bolstering a catholic-nationalistic idea in order to preserve what he considers the true American Identity. According to Whitehead, Baker and Perry, Trump represented, at least for many Americans, a figure who embodied “a symbolic defense of the United States’ perceived Christian heritage” (1). While the Puritan dream came to an end because of the proliferation of several dissenter groups, Trumps may seem to unify the country by embracing Christianity as an ethnic bond the individuals identify with.

Consequently, this Christian evangelizing mission is considered by Gorski as Christian Nationalism, since it is a “pervasive set of beliefs and ideals that merge American and Christian group memberships—along with their histories and futures” (Whitehead et al. 148). These authors conclude that “Christian nationalism, however, draws its roots from “Old Testament” parallels between America and Israel, who was commanded to maintain cultural and blood purity, often through war, conquest, and separatism. Unlike civil religion, historical and contemporary appeals to Christian nationalism are often quite explicitly evangelical, and consequently, imply the exclusion of other religious faiths or cultures” (Whitehead et al.150). The sustainability of the community has a huge impact and it gathers people, but the fact that God has been and is important to American people’s way to understand of life does not seem to bring them together, on the contrary, it is a reason for segregation.

Therefore, Donald Trump encourages an exclusive vision of American society based on Christian nationalism and isolationism, which seems a defense against the outsider through economic potential and thus secure the state and its individuals. This

doubled-edged sword represents both an isolated-independent community that, paradoxically, must be a role model for the rest of the world. Trump's vindication arises from an ethnocentric American perspective that sees multiculturalism as a threat towards his "true" American identity. Therefore, we must discuss whether American identity holds "one fixed national identity [...] in comparison to all others" or it is closer to "a multicultural society all identities are equally valuable" (Skinner 282). This dilemma leads to the next section, that intends to address which specific archetype truly represents American identity.

## 2. The figure of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant

In previous section, we have examined how religion emerged as a cornerstone of the American identity. While the transverse axis of these Colonies was Christianity, it was mainly under its Protestant branch. However, we have observed that, when religious beliefs are linked with identity, these spiritual convictions may trigger segregation rather than unity<sup>6</sup>.

Nevertheless, while disputes over religion emerged, these confrontations did not “preclude the existence of a more generalized Protestant identity [and] popular Anti-Catholicism” (Kaufmann 5). The colonial expedition, despite theist disputes, had been successful in planting the seeds to create a religious community that would be crucial to define the Anglo-American ethnicity, which “may be traced to the settlement patterns the United States during the colonial period” (Kaufmann 4).

Gary D. German defines “ethnicity” as a collective, cultural community, which shares an ancestral origin and has certain responsibilities, rights and obligations. Language also plays a crucial role and holds a symbolic importance, as well as religion. According to German, religion reinforces the divine justification for the actions of the group, adding a sacred dimension to the concept of ethnicity (6). The genesis and character of the Puritan mission during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century rendered the American ethnicity as inalienable linked to the “European Culture”. The existence of an Anglo-Saxon common background, language, beliefs and traditions had a great impact in America and “English Protestantism gradually came to fuse with a vision of the English “nation” as a purely ethnic Anglo-Saxon body whose God-appointed mission was to civilize the world” (German 6).

However, we wonder what Anglo-Saxon refers to. Originally, the term Anglo-Saxon refers to Germanic tribes from Continental Europe who conquered the British Isle, as well as their descendants and indigenous British groups who adopted their language and culture. The 17<sup>th</sup> Century Anglo-Saxon Puritan migration towards America reinforced the “Anglo-Saxon myth”, whose formation and development is based on a

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<sup>6</sup> Contrary to what may be expected, the lack of dominant religious force under a Christian creed- produced and unplanned and religious tolerance due to a pluralist (Anglicans, Baptists Presbyterians, Quakers, German sectarian groups...) facet in which any religious form was able to coerce another. For more information on this issue, check Parrillo, Vincent N. "Diversity in America: A sociohistorical analysis." *Sociological Forum*. Vol. 9. No. 4. Kluwer Academic Publishers-Plenum Publishers, 1994.

purifying American genealogy. Due to the divine plan the Puritans' "election and mission and its description of America as a [...] promised land, slowly came to infect the entire nation" (Kaufmann 7). Their belief in progress and the perfectibility of man, due to their condition as God's earthly agents to bring about an exceptional civilization, exerted a powerful influence when building the American character.

However, the uprising of the Anglo-Saxon ethnicity as leading group not only responds to religious dogmas. It was also sustained by an important demographic boost of British-origin communities. During the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century, a rapid growth of population in America elevated the number of British people living in the new Continent. As Parrillo exposes, "By 1689, the population of colonial America had reached an estimated 210,000 Europeans, about 80% of them "transplanted Englishmen". However, even Englishmen themselves emerged "divergent religious beliefs [that] created numerous subcultures whose shared sense of identity, social insulation, and endogamy resulted in limited outgroup social interaction" (Parrillo 526). Defining the American archetype was intricate because of the multicultural reality already present in America.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and especially the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, America was becoming a land where an amalgam of Dutch, Spanish German, Swedish or Belgian communities started to coexist. Between 1689 and 1775, the population increased twelvefold, to about 2.6 million. The rapid growth of African slavery and the influx of hundreds of thousands of non-English diversities in America significantly changed the character of the colonial population in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Parrillo 528). This author reveals the diversity in America throughout the table number 1 (Parrillo 530):

**Table 1. Approximate Colonial Population in 1776<sup>a</sup>**

Ethnic group	New England	%	Middle	%	Southern	%	Total	%
English	461,400	70.5	369,700	40.6	382,400	37.4	1,213,500	46.9
Scots	26,100	4.0	60,700	6.7	71,400	7.0	158,200	6.1
Scots-Irish	18,100	2.8	59,200	6.5	39,200	3.8	116,500	4.5
Irish	9800	1.5	31,100	3.4	30,500	3.0	71,400	2.8
German	2400	0.4	138,700	15.2	36,100	3.5	177,200	6.8
Dutch	1600	0.2	57,700	6.3	2100	0.2	61,400	2.4
French	5200	0.8	17,000	1.9	11,100	1.1	33,300	1.3
Swedish	—	—	12,100	1.3	2500	0.2	14,600	0.6
Unassigned	110,700	16.9	24,900	2.7	6400	0.6	142,000	5.5
African	14,800	2.3	113,200	12.4	401,100	39.2	529,100	20.5
Indigenous <sup>b</sup>	4000	0.6	26,000	2.9	40,000	3.9	70,000	2.7
Total	654,100	25.3	910,300	35.2	1,022,800	39.5	2,587,200	100.0

<sup>a</sup>Source: Figures result from a compilation and extrapolation of data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Colonial and Pre-Federal Statistics*, Series Z 1-132.

<sup>b</sup>Data for indigenous tribes include only those living east of the Mississippi. Some anthropologists and historians give higher estimates.

Despite the mixture of cultures and nationalities, the census also reveals that the English, Scots, and Scots-Irish comprised most of the population, "leading many

observers to identify this classical white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) collectivity as the dominant group” (Parrillo 532). Paradoxically, it was precisely the heterogeneity due to foreign surrounding communities (German, Dutch, French, Swedish, or indigenous...) which triggered the enforcement of the Anglo-Saxon ethnicity.

This paradox is explained by Eric Kaufmann’s theory of “fission and fusion”. He assumes that fission (understood as division) and fusion (seen as integration) “are processes that create ethnies [while...] ethnic boundaries tend to remain relatively stable while population flows back and forth across them. During such a process, ethnies accrete new members to their core through assimilation”. (Kaufmann 18). Since the Anglo-Saxons wanted to ascertain their position in the midst of a multicultural society, they led a cultural offensive in order to impose their costumes, religion and language. Therefore, the WASP’ ethnogenesis emerges as both a dissimilatory and assimilatory process that fluctuates between internal impositions and external threats.

The acronym WASP stands for “White”, “Anglo-Saxon” and “Protestant”. The mother tongue of the Anglo-Saxon Americans was English, which, nevertheless, had to compete with other bordering languages. As Read states, “during the settlement of America, particularly in the middle colonies, various languages competed with English for supremacy [and] immigrants from continental Europe brought their native tongues” (93). However, such a diversity forced English to be expanded into different communities established in America, and a process of “anglicization” centred on the language took place. Welsh, Scots, Swedish, Dutch gave way to the English language:

The majority who were...of Dutch descent, succumbed to the English language. The younger generation scarcely ever spoke anything but English, and there were many who became offended if they were taken for Dutch because they preferred to pass for English (Kaufmann 17).

However, it is essential to recall that the term “WASP” refers to an ethnic group with restricted boundaries beyond language or religion, since it also established a racial supremacy. Racist imagery took different forms and blacks, native Indians or slaves, did not fit into the WASP ethnicity. These historical constructions of race in America especially discriminated people of African origin, who were defined as animals and property owned by white men, “because black men did hard manual labor, justifying the harsh conditions forced upon them required objectifying their bodies as big, strong, and

stupid” (Ferber 14). Besides, economic issues lied behind the institution of slavery in America, since economy grew increasingly reliant on cheap labour, thus creating an economic dependence on these immigrants. Women were relegated to a secondary role. Atkinson and Boles identify their condition as mere complements of a marital relation, giving the acronym “WASP” a new sense: “Wives as Senior Partners” (862)

Based on a vision of a European origin, shared language (English) and a Puritan dogma which justified the actions of the community, the WASP group set in motion the ethnogenesis of the “true” American individual. The parameters include:

a sense of election (Puritan), a myth of exclusive genealogical descent (Anglo-Saxon), a set of cultural boundary markers ('WASP'), a process of dominant-conformity (Anglo-conformity), an association with a specific territory (United States/Frontier) [...<sup>7</sup>] Together, these elements formed the myth-symbol complex of the “American ethnîe”(Kaufmann 25).

This ideological and social construction that is the American ethnîe was, then, deliberately founded. Consequently, the United States was not an exception to the rule that states that nations are formed by core ethnic groups which later attempt to shape them in their own perception. The Americans “are designed to be White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant”. At the core of this ethnogenesis, individuals seek to achieve a sense of belonging and terrestrial immortality through identification with a group, which is the America, rooted in land. (Kaufmann 10)

The WASP conception gathered momentum in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and Benjamin Franklin played an important role. In 1751, he published “Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, & etc”, which is considered a landmark in the history of the American identity and culture. We will analyse it below.

## 2.1. Benjamin Franklin’s demographic study

Benjamin Franklin (Boston 1706- Philadelphia, 1790) was a writer, inventor, politician, diplomat and scientist. However, he is mainly remembered for being considered one of the Founding Fathers of the United States and for being the epitome of

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<sup>7</sup> Through Kaufmann’s description of the American ethnîe, he also makes reference to a “life-style representation (Yeoman) and a communal Golden Age (Jefferson’s republic) to which the group seeks to return” (25)



the American self-made man. In one of his most famous essays, “Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, & etc”, Franklin depicts the economic, demographic and ethnic situation in America during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century, but also reveals his desire to ascertain the Anglo-Saxon hegemony on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. This essay contains 24 numbered paragraphs.

Franklin states that the British Empire should take over nativism in America, increasing their power and their population by expanding across the Americas at the expense of other civilizations. Due to this supremacist vision of the Anglo-Saxon identity, Franklin emerges as a key figure in the history of American population, developing different ideas that are crucial to understand American nativism. According to Houston, “historians of immigration and ethnicity [...] have condemned Franklin’s nativism and assigned him an important role in the development of assimilationist and exclusionary policies in North America” (1).

America was emerging as a prosperous territory in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century due to a wealthy trade-market, a demographic boost in population (based on native descent and a large immigrant flow) and a vast land that allowed further expansion. However, the large wave of immigrants and the multicultural landscape present in the Colonies obstructed the emergence of a unified, American character. The term “American” referred, during most of Franklin’s lifetime, to the inhabitants of a geographic region, whether Native Americans or British colonists. Only in the wake of the imperial crisis of the 1760’s, and the revolutionary struggles of the 1770’s, did it begin to assume unique social, political and cultural meanings (Houston 5)

As we have seen before, the sharp growth in population took place especially from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In spite of the fact that Franklin supports that an active, dynamic population was crucial to enhance the Colonies economy, the constant arrival of people from European countries was hampering the development at the base of the British Empire<sup>8</sup> (Europe), triggering frequent disputes with Native Americans. As Houston declares, this “challenged the capacities of basic social

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<sup>8</sup>As Houston lays out in *Population Politics: Benjamin Franklin and the Peopling of North America*, “this growth was unevenly distributed in space and time [...]. Its impact was often devastating. In Scotland and Ireland, shortages of land drove thousands numbers into poverty, and spurred waves of emigration to in the decades prior to the Revolution. From Germany came thousands more, pushed by the war and poverty and religious persecution, and pulled by independent immigration brokers who exchanged ocean passages for a term of indentured servitude” (19).

and political institutions on both sides of the Atlantic [and the British Government] sought to stop immigration and impose strict limits on American economic development” (Houston, 19). Contrary to these limiting policies, Franklin stated that “Britain should not too much restrain Manufactures in her Colonies. A wise and good Mother will not do it. To distress, is to weaken, and weakening the Children, weakens the whole family” (section 10), establishing that a prosperous economy at both sides of the Ocean would result in mutual betterment.

However, this did not mean that Franklin was in favour of the newcomers (or at least, not all of them), tackling one of the most controversial issues in America; the institution of slavery. As can be observed in Section Number 2 of Franklin’s essay, many African immigrants were held as slaves in America. While this subjugation was considered one of the cornerstones of American economic development due to its affordability and servitude, Franklin opposed this bondage since it was economically irrational, immoral and degrading **for the slaveowner**<sup>9</sup>. According to the founding father, slavery was not as cheap as it was thought due to their price cost, several insurances, clothing or diets<sup>10</sup> [...]. The reason why Americans purchased slaves was their physical and moral weakness:

The Whites who have Slaves, not labouring, are enfeebled, and therefore not so generally prolific; the Slaves being work’d too hard, and ill feed, their Constitutions are broken, and the Deaths among them are more than the Births; so that a continual supply is needed from Africa” (Franklin Section 5).

By opposing to the entrance of more immigrants and the constant surplus of slave workers, Franklin asserts that the American nativism does not have to depend on external arrivals, but on native generations. This way, Franklin urges to remove foreigners in order to offer the vacant and vast American territory to white people, re-awakening the white race that was also dying in European nations:

The Importation of Foreigners into a Country that has as many Inhabitants as the present Employments and Provisions for Subsistence will bear; will be in the end no Increase of People; unless the New Comers have more Industry and Frugality than the Natives, and then they will provide more Subsistence, and increase in the Country, but **they while gradually eat the Natives out**<sup>11</sup>. Nor it is necessary to bring in Foreigners to fill up any occasional Vacancy in a Country, for such Vacancy (if the Laws are Good, will soon be filled by natural Generation (Franklin Section 21).

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<sup>9</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Franklin offers in the section number 12 in “Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries & c” a thorough detail of the overall expense of holding a slave.

<sup>11</sup> Emphasis added

In the paragraph 23, Franklin clears up any doubt about who should inhabit the American territory. He projects an exponential demographic boom in the population of the British colonies:

thus there are suppos'd to be now upwards of One Million English Souls in North America [...] This Million doubling, suppose but once in 25 Years, will in another Century be more than the People of England, and the greatest Number of Englishmen will be on this Side of the Water.

Franklin asserts the supremacy and the right of the British Empire to lead a genealogical campaign to preserve the Anglo-Saxon ethnicity in both sides of the ocean. The corollary of this native mission would result in America's economic potential, which would supply the individual but also would assure the nation.

How important an affair to Britain, is the present Treaty for settling the Bounds between her Colonies [...] and how careful should she be to secure Room enough, since on the Room depends so much the Increase of her People (Franklin Section 22).

Therefore, Franklin was strongly committed to a process of "anglicization" that also had to do with the establishment of a common linguistic corpus, thus rejecting any bilingualism that could rise as a threat to the dominant language of the Anglo-Saxon language, English. As he states:

Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of *Aliens*, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they acquire our Complexion (Section 23).

However, Franklin's most piercing fragment through his essay appears in his last paragraph. It is really shocking because of its radical vision on ethnic terms and the straightforward language that he uses to make its defence known. Franklin shows a harsh hostility towards those who are not white, not just in America, but in the world:

The Number of purely white People in the World is proportionably very small. All *Africa* is black or tawny. *Asia* chiefly tawny. *America* (exclusive of the new Comers) wholly so. And in *Europe*, the *Spaniards*, *Italians*, *French*, *Russians* and *Swedes*, are generally of what we call a swarthy Complexion; **as are the *Germans* also, the *Saxons* only excepted, who with the *English*, make the principal Body of White People on the Face of the Earth**<sup>12</sup>. I could wish their Numbers were increased. And while we are, as I may call it, *Scouring* our Planet, by clearing *America* of Woods, and so making this Side of our Globe reflect a brighter Light to the Eyes of Inhabitants in *Mars* or *Venus*, why should we in the Sight of Superior Beings, darken its People? why increase the Sons of *Africa*, by Planting them in

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<sup>12</sup> Emphasis added

*America, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White and Red? But perhaps I am partial to the Complexion of my Country, for such Kind of Partiality is natural to Mankind. (Franklin Section 24)*

Franklin's demographic study criticizes the advancement of black people in detriment of white population, and particularly the threat towards the Anglo-Saxon ethnics in both sides of the ocean. Franklin is granting the British Empire the responsibility of nativism in America, conferring the Anglo-Saxon ethnics the responsibility to populate the land. This ethnic hegemony could only be achieved through an economic welfare that would sustain the nation (still under British control) and its individuals, at the expense of others. Since individual development and consequent economic prosperity is directly linked to regulating population, Franklin displays a racial nativist vision which designs who should be an American inhabitant.

Once analysed the emergence of the WASP individual and Franklin's essay, let's jump once again towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In this following section, I aim to identify Trump's rhetoric, finding out whether he fits, portrays and defends within the parameters that defined the WASP identity, but also intending to find any correlation with Franklin's *Observation concerning the Increase of Mankind*.

## 2.2. Donald Trump, the true definition of a WASP

Donald Trump was born on 1946, in the bosom of an upper-middle class. His mother, Scottish, and his paternal grandparents, German immigrants, represent his Anglo-Saxon heritage. His father was a successful man in the building industry. Donald would inherit his father's luxuriousness patrimony, emerging as one of the wealthiest people in America, which would provide him a wide-ranging network of powerful contacts that would enable his candidature launch. The Presidency of the United States holds a symbolic importance since represents what the country (should) stand for, based on the traditions built up over time through common behaviour.

While candidates have usually tried to be discreet about their assets, Donald Trump echoes his patrimony, boasting about his hotels, private aircraft or golf clubs, promoting

himself as the true definition of success<sup>13</sup>. In March 2011, while considering jumping into the race for the White House, he declared that "Part of the beauty of me is that I am very rich." When he entered the presidential race, he claimed that "I have total net worth of \$8.73bn,". However, he was not "doing that to brag. I'm doing that to show that's the kind of thinking our country needs." If there was any doubt left, he asserted; "Nobody's ever been more successful than me. I'm the most successful person ever to run".

However, cultural and political goals lie behind these declarations. His ostentatious speech turns him into the potential successful WASP most Americans desire to become. Moreover, he distances himself from the politicians;

I've watched the politicians. I've dealt with them all my life. If you can't make a good deal with a politician, then there's something wrong with you. You're certainly not very good. And that's what we have representing us. They will never make America great again. They don't even have a chance.

He thus emerges as the saviour of the nation. He declares that Politicians have misguided the country due to their ineptitude, but also their reliance on economic interest groups. While politicians are controlled "fully by lobbyists, by the donors, and by the special interests, fully", as Trump declared in his 2015 presidential announcement speech in June 2015. He represents economic independence. Donald Trump success lies on his economic assets, because he is so rich that he cannot be bought.

Therefore, it is no surprise that most of his speeches are centred on the economic situation of the country, emerging as the "answer to a failing US economy, infrastructure, and immigration policy" (Huber 223). In his presidential announcement speech, Trump also claimed that the United States had become a country repeatedly humiliated by others, asserting the following;

Our country is in serious trouble. We don't have victories anymore. We used to have victories, but we don't have them. When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let's say, China in a trade deal? They kill us. I beat China all the time. All the time. When did we beat Japan at anything? [...] When do we beat Mexico at the border? [...] they're killing us economically. The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems.

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<sup>13</sup> As we have already seen, Trump defines himself in his own website as "the very definition of the American success story, setting the standards of excellence in his business endeavors, and now, for the United States of America."

For this failure, he points to external economic threats, which jeopardize the racial and financial status of the “true American”. Through a populist discourse, he has been able to connect with that part of the population that feels identified with a “forgotten” WASP ideology, especially located around agrarian locations with economic problems and a sense of nostalgia due to a “lost identity”. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century, Benjamin Franklin supported anti-immigration policies due to a demographic boost that jeopardized the supremacy of the white man. More than two centuries later, the 2012 U.S. Census Bureau projected that “the national population of Non-White racial groups will exceed that of Whites by the middle of this Century. Many Americans in the U.S. view race relations as “zero sum” in which status gains for minorities means status loss for whites” (Major et al. 2).

This demographic shift in the United States, reinforced Trump’s discourse about white dominance, which was losing control in detriment of ethnic minorities. Being aware that “constructions of race have changed throughout U.S history to advance white male status and power, various racial/ethnic groups have been targeted- black slaves, white ethnics [...] and both immigrants and U.S. born people of Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican origins” he decided to tackle “exclusionary and discriminatory practices to maintain a subordinate social status” (Huber 235) which have the objective of safeguarding the WASP ideology. His recurrent “No border, no Country folks” is a representative example of this: One America News Network’s “On Point with guest host Sarah Palin” commercial from august 2016, Trump mini speech...

I don’t like what I see happening to America. The infrastructure of our country is a laughingstock all over the world. Our airports, our bridges, our roadways are falling apart. It’s a terrible thing to see. . . Millions of people are flowing across our southern border. We’ve got to build a real wall. With all of this our country has tremendous potential. Let’s make America great again.

White supremacy is a response to those WASP who were longing for a new shifting in U.S. demographics, blaming immigration, especially Mexicans as a “threat to a “traditional America and the “white establishment” that has historically maintained power and status above people and colour” (Huber 237). Blaming immigration as the main factor posing economic, racial and identity uncertainties, he repeatedly talks about border he security concerns, trade issues or jobs outsourcing:

When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best...They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good (Trump Campaign Announcement Speech).

Nevertheless, adopting American nativism as merely “white newly born” is erroneous. Many non-white people continue to be born every single day in America, becoming native Americans per se, integrated in the American society, its citizenship and way of life. In Huber's words:

racist nativism articulates how perceived racial differences construct false perceptions of people of colour as non-native and not belonging to the monolithic American identity that has historically been tied to perceptions and constructions of whiteness (220).

Trump also resorts to language as a distinctive cultural marker that differentiates the desired American individual from the rest. At the beginning of his presidency, the White House removed all Spanish-language content from its website, which had been launched during Obama administration. This web page, [whitehouse.gov/espanol](http://whitehouse.gov/espanol), is no longer available, which reminds us of the process of anglicization took under the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that Franklin advocated for. Nowadays, English is rendered by Trump as a hegemonic and imperialist tool to expand American culture not only in America, but also around the globe.

If we have already talk about Trump as a White, Anglo-Saxon man, it is time to talk about Donald Trump as a Protestant in order complete his WASP identification. Trump has declared his “Make America Christian Again” motto many times, becoming a symbol of the United States Christian heritage. So, when Donald Trump states that he wants “his country back”, he appeals to the base of the country, the Puritan community.

In a tweet posted on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019, he stated that “Numerous states introducing Bible Literacy classes, giving students the option of studying the Bible. Starting to make a turn back? Great!” However, the First Amendment prevents the government from using any public funds or institutions like public schools to endorse or establish any particular religious tradition, while guarantees the people the right to practice whatever religion they choose. Trump is trying to assert Christianity as the state religion, indoctrinating children since an early age at the schools. Besides, it is commonplace to pray before sport games, as well as the dictum “In God We Trust” on

currency or the “God Bless the United States of America” at the end of every State of the Union or other major political speech. Through a unifying slogan around Christianity and the threats about segregation and disunion, he is leaving behind the ethnic-religious diversity present in America:

But we are going to protect Christianity. And if you look what’s going on throughout the world, you look at Syria where they’re, if you’re Christian, they’re chopping off heads. You look at the different places, and Christianity, it’s under siege. I’m a Protestant. I’m very proud of it. Presbyterian to be exact. But I’m very proud of it, very, very proud of it. [...] we have to unify. We have to band together.... Our country has to do that around Christianity (Trump’s Liberty University Commencement Speech)

Therefore, when Donald Trump talks to its audience, he mainly manages to address a WASP audience that envision him as the solution to their problems, coupled with “Congress inability to provide solutions to the social and economic problems of ordinary American citizens” (Dodo 609). His Wealthy, White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant traits make him the right response to “those social, cultural and economic anxieties that millions of Americans feel unease and are angry about. Those are the so-called silent majority” (Dodo 609). Donald Trump deliberately personifies a discourse that increases the gap between Americans, while his ideal United States emerges as a “folk community bound together by deep cultural and ethnic ties [which generates] a strong sense of white identity and violent hostility to other races” (Cha 85)

While Franklin vindicated the White-Anglo Saxon Protestant individual as the true “American”, setting exclusionary parameters to define the American individual, Trump’s restrictive immigration policies represent a highly supremacist society based on the WASP class he embodies, emerging as a victory against uprising forces that struggled for a racial, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.

Up to this point, we can conclude that the most distinguishing feature of the American individual up to the 1750’s was the WASP distinction, bounded to a common European heritage. However, the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century witnessed a series of events that set in motion a conducive environment so the thirteen colonies could emancipate from the mother country that controlled them from the other side of the Atlantic. This uprising emerged as a political exercise that had the task to bring together people from different regions and backgrounds in order to be successful, uniting against the British Kingdom, which represented its genesis. Once again, the development of the American individual



bifurcates into a **fission and fusion** process, by merging different colonies into a unique community. However, would the American Revolution succeed in establishing a cohesive American society, as well as a unique, self-defined character of the American individual under the yoke of a new Nation?

### 3. American National Ethnicism

Throughout the previous section, we have identified the WASP individual as the American archetype up to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century. However, despite WASP European heritage and their unequivocal ties with the British Empire, an escalation of tension between colonists and the mother country ultimately ended up in the American Revolution. This conflict set a major issue, transforming American identity in a new process of fusion and fission. Defining American identity would be challenging: while breaking up with the European roots, the Founding Fathers had to assert an American mode that could agglutinate the different nature of the thirteen Colonies.

However, I find it is essential to provide a contextual approach to the causes that unleashed the conflict between the Colonies and the British Empire. Military struggles are always influenced by social, political, philosophical or religious ideas. The American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence were affected by the ideas of the Age of the Enlightenment. This intellectual and philosophic movement emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, achieving the zenith of its influence during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The bottom line of the Enlightenment was relying on reason in order to create a better society for everyone. Therefore, philosophers following this movement address issues like political representation, the natural rights of men, limits of religion and the divine right of monarchies. Two figures from the Enlightenment played a vital role in the American Revolution and consequently in the Declaration of Independence. The first was John Locke. This English philosopher from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century exerted great influence due to his revolutionary ideas and thoughts, expressed in his pamphlets. He advocated for “life, liberty and property” as rights inherent to the human being, stressing that governments had to be elected by people, and opposed to hereditary monarchies.

The other figure was the English-born Thomas Paine (1736-1809), considered one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. His pamphlets were influential during the start of the American Revolutions and inspired many patriots to break free from Great Britain. The pamphlet “Common Sense” is considered one of the most remarkable publishing events in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It is estimated that over 100.000 copies were sold during the first months since it appeared. This document galvanized the American Revolution, helping to spark the colonists’ struggle for Independence.

Signed anonymously by an “Englishman”, “Common Sense” serves as the final catalyst for those people who were still uncertain about whether America should break with Great Britain or not. According to Fruchtman, this manifest “successfully shattered the residual American psychological resistance to independence” (Greene and Pole 254). Paine, like John Locke, rejected absolute Monarchy, since it violated the Laws of Nature and Religion. He supported an independent and democratic America, where citizens had been relegated to a second-class status in detriment of the British Empire. To achieve this independence, Paine asserted that the war could not be postponed. American Independence not only benefitted the Colonies, but the whole world<sup>14</sup>. Hamowy states that Paine is “calling upon Americans to embrace their destiny, to serve as an oasis of freedom and enlightenment in a world of oppression and darkness (Greene and Pole 258)

Nevertheless, what was the situation in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that lead many colonists to embrace these beliefs? What is known today as the United States was largely colonized by the English, the French and the Spanish Empire. In 1754, the French and Indian War provided Great Britain with vast territories in North America, but the English Empire was left heavily in debt. To help pay war expenses, Great Britain decided to impose several acts that either taxed the colonists or placed stricter controls on trade. These laws included the Sugar Act (1764), the Stamp Tax (1765), the Townshend Acts (1767), and the Tea Act (1773). Additionally, Parliament enacted the Quartering Act (1765), legislation which forced colonists to provide for the basic needs of soldiers stationed within its borders

However, most of the Colonists rejected these clauses, which they considered abusive. Under the slogan “No taxation without representation”, the Colonies denounced that they should not be taxed by the British Parliament without having a representative in the English government to fight for their rights. This committee alleged that the geographical situation of the colonists, being on the opposite side of the Ocean, made the American representation in the British Parliament impractical. To formalize their dominance, the Parliament of Great Britain issued the Declaratory Act (1766), which promulgated the right to govern the Colonies, stating that the British Parliament “had the right claimed a right to bind the colonists “in all cases whatsoever” (Maier 3)

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<sup>14</sup> Another example of American as a “city upon a Hill”, a beacon for the rest of the World to follow.

As a consequence, the Colonists started to boycott British goods and complain about these policies. However, these initially peaceful protests, eventually led to a highly tense situation. As a response to these insubordinations, British Parliament increased taxes, and 4000 British soldiers were sent in 1768 to silence the people from Boston. Far from appeasing the inhabitants of this city, this movement carried out more boycotts, leading to an atmosphere of tension that resulted in what is known as the “Boston massacre” (1770). This confrontation ended up with five colonists being killed by British soldiers. Word of the massacre spread out around the 13 Colonies, reinforcing the sense of rebellion towards the English Empire. In 1774, more conflicts<sup>15</sup> led Britain to punish Massachusetts and to appoint Thomas Gage as Military governor of the Massachusetts Bay. Besides, the Intolerable Acts law was passed, which punished colonial defiance. These “Coercive Acts”, rendered as unconstitutional by the American colonial settlements, also fed the American opposition against the British Empire.

In 1774, the First Continental Congress took place in Philadelphia. Delegates from twelve Colonies<sup>16</sup> worked collectively to respond to British coercive actions, claiming that the British Parliament had no right to interfere in internal American affairs. Once again, the British responded with more restrictions and increased their army presence in America. However, this did not prevent further disputes, ending up with the British Parliament declaring a state of rebellion in Massachusetts.

In 1775, the Second Continental Congress convened again in Philadelphia. Representatives from the thirteen Colonies (Georgia finally enrolled) came together to decide on further measures, and they ended up making decisions about the impending war, appointing George Washington as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. British military forces were defeated, and despite further British reinforcements, Colonists took control. By March 1776 the British chose to evacuate and Congress was formally established. Thomas Jefferson first drafted what became the Declaration of Independence, ratified on 1776. From this moment on, the thirteen colonies officially declared that no longer wanted to be part of British Empire. Becoming a new nation, the United States of

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<sup>15</sup>In 1773 the Sons of Liberty, in an action known as the Boston Tea Party, threw the cargo of tea of three British ships (which had the monopoly of the trade and did not have to pay taxes to sell tea on American soil) into the sea. This protest against the British Empire emerged as a turning point in the American Independence war.

<sup>16</sup> Georgia decided not to participate in the First Continental Congress.

America, the United States could pave the way for the definite imposition of the American identity.

However, identity problems emerge many times since this term is not easily linked to nationalism. The term “nation”, derived from a Latin word, is associated with “birth” and can refer to a group of people who share the same place of birth. Sometimes it is used in contrast with state, which designates a political entity. Benedict Anderson considered that nation, nationality and nationalism were all very difficult to define. That is why he created the concept of imagined communities. An imagined community is a term established by Anderson in the 1980’s to analyze nationalism. According to him, **a nation is an imagined, limited and independent community**<sup>17</sup> (Skinner 223).

He affirms that a state is imagined, because there is no personal interrelation and knowledge of every single member with each other. It is limited because it has boundaries that restrict its territory, there is not a single nation that comprises the entire mankind. Finally, Anderson declares that an imagined community is also independent because it controls its own national destiny within a nation state (Skinner 223). Therefore, Anderson implies that a nation is a socially constructed community. If a nation is imagined by the people within the group, then we might assume that national identity is just a vision as well.

According to Kaufmann, the Anglo-Saxon Protestants were the first European group to “imagine” the territory of the United States as its homeland. In its mind, the American nation-state, its land, its history, its mission and its Anglo-American people were woven into one great tapestry of the imagination. Therefore, this social construction that is the United States was founded by “Americans”, having the right to populate this land and the mandate to mould the nation (and any immigrants who might enter it) into their own Anglo-Saxon, Protestant self-image. However, we wonder whether this archetype continues to be the image of the American individual after the emancipation from the British Empire and consequent Declaration of Independence.

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<sup>17</sup> Emphasis added

### 3.1 Declaring Independence

The Declaration of Independence was proclaimed during the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. This document was written by Thomas Jefferson<sup>18</sup>, and signed by representatives of the 13 Colonies. While WASPs were pioneers envisioning a new ethnic core located in the “New Continent”, the Founding Fathers had to lay the foundations of a new, independent Nation. This political exercise was ground-breaking, setting in motion the creation of an American national identity linked to this merging nation, the United States of America. However, we need to clarify that the Declaration is:

Neither a statute nor a Constitution [...]. It may have helped to constitute American ideals of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” but it was not intended to become a document of constitutional law, despite its popular association [...] as a statement of basic political principle” (Armitage 39).

Therefore, this symbolic manuscript emerged as an iconic declaration in American national consciousness. Aimed to forge a cohesive society, alongside a national identity inherent to the United States. The document consists of 4 different parts. The first part contains a “philosophical preamble of the Declaration attempts to set forth the ideological substance of American revolutionary thought, which was grounded in a theory of natural, inalienable rights (Green and Pole 259). The second part addresses George III, King of Great Britain during the American revolution: “The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States”. Jefferson enumerates King George’s abuse of power, offering a long list of grievances that justify the revolt. The final section officially declares the Colonies detachment from the British Empire, declaring:

Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States (Jefferson et al 87)

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Jefferson designed the draft, later edited by a committee made up of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston. Then, it was edited again by representatives of the Congress.

The introduction relies heavily on the philosophical and political ideas of the Enlightenment period, particularly John Locke. The Declaration clearly affirms that all men “are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness”. Even though this quote traditionally belongs to Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), where he had previously stressed that humans, by nature, had the right to “a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness”, based on the protection of “life, liberty and property”. Jefferson adds a slight distinction, altering Locke’s triumvirate, when he asserts that these inalienable rights include “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. Behind the ideals of liberalism and republicanism, Jefferson “pursuit of happiness” has to be understood as a pursuit of wealth and status, a struggle for economic independence, foundation of what, later on, would evolve into the American Dream. According to Antieau, “he rather clearly indicated that to him property was not a highly significant natural right” since “specific property claims were civil and not natural rights. (65).

However, what are these natural rights and where do they come from? Antieau states that “The Virginia Founding Fathers were in substantial agreement that the ultimate source of our natural rights was our creator” (46). Therefore, natural rights depended upon theological considerations. Jefferson supports this view stating that men are “endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable rights” (85). By rejecting the figure of a King, the Founding Fathers wanted to found societies that would be governed, as Jefferson put it, by “the moral law to which man has been subjected by his Creator, and of which his feelings, or conscience as it is sometimes called, are the evidence with which his Creator has furnished him. The moral duties which exist between individual and individual in a state of nature accompany them into a state of society” (Antieau 63). Therefore, Jefferson started this society has to orbit around the premise of the following unalienable rights:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness (Jefferson et al 85).

It is remarkable that Thomas Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence pled for an egalitarian commitment towards a multicultural society, while at the same time it did not

condemn slavery, or the lack of social, economic and cultural rights of women. These factors did not seem to belong in the “all men are created equal” speech, which holds that “truth, self-evident unalienable rights among which are life, liberty or the pursuit of happiness” (Jefferson et al. 85). Would the Declaration become a turning point regarding measures for social inclusion in the United States?

Thomas Jefferson, main author of the Declaration of Independence, rendered black people as “inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind” (Magnis 491). The alleged superiority of the whites over blacks justified their dominance, and their passive position in terms of the abolition of slavery. According to Magnis, Jefferson political concerns were:

“for the republic that he helped to establish for it to thrive and to provide liberty and happiness for its white citizens [...] in Jefferson’s horizon, the happiest and securest citizens were white, the Black slaves would remain chattel property until freed, and then they could be removed beyond the reach of mixture (507).

Therefore, the Declaration of Independence “it is now argued, it was a white man’s documents that its author rarely applied to his or to any slaves. The Constitution created aristocratic privilege while consolidating black bondage” (Freehling 82).

While the Declaration of Independence allegedly promoted natural rights, independence and self-autonomy, **this document is decisive regarding what it does not address, rather than what it identifies**<sup>19</sup>. Since women and slaves were not considered citizens at that time, they do not enter into the equation and are not part of those unalienable rights for **men**<sup>20</sup>. Despite celebrating liberty and equality by stating that “all men are created equal” the Founding Fathers accepted a system in which people were enslaved because of their racial status. As a result, “the effects of the framers’ compromise have remained for generations. They arose from the contradiction between guaranteeing liberty and justice to all, and denying both to Negroes” (Marshall 283). This unresolved issue would eventually lead the new Nation to a Civil War. This extract from the Declaration of Independence, justifying the American revolution, seems to foretell the American Civil War:

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<sup>19</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> Emphasis added.



When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation (Jefferson et al. 85).

However, it is essential to analyse the Founding Fathers themselves in order to discern their intentions when writing the Declaration of Independence. Even though it was mainly written by Jefferson, it was devised and delimited by the rest of Founding Fathers. The analysis of this group of ninety-nine is useful in order to understand “ the extent to which the Founding Fathers were a socially homogeneous group [...], such an approach can improve our understanding of society and politics during the creation of the national government” (Brown 465).

Analysing their family descent and ethnic background, it seems evident that we might want to associate the Founding Fathers as representative agents of the WASP ethnic core. As we can observe in the table 5 shown below (Brown 479), the ethnic background of the Founding Fathers was British. As Brown states:

aside from blacks, the one major ethnic group not represented was that of the German-Americans [...] the absence of the German suggests that eighteenth century America was primarily a British melting-pot. Scots, Irish, Welsh, Scots-Irish, and other eighteenth-century immigrants joined with the English, but the Germans remained apart (468).

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TABLE V  
ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Origin of Family	%	N
England	57	37
Scotland	16	10
Ireland*	19	12
Wales	5	3
Netherlands	2	1
Sweden	2	1
Totals	100	64

\* This category includes Irish, Anglo-Irish, Scots-Irish.

As analysed in the picture below, we can also observe that 86 percent were born in America, while 14% percent were immigrants. 64% of them were descended from families who had been in the Colonies before 1700, while 26% were residents in the Colonies before 1640. Brown finds enlightening that among the signers of the Declaration, the proportion of people whose families had been in the colonies before 1640 was 35%, concluding that “in the most direct, personal terms the Revolutionary leadership of 1776 included men who were defending their existing American identity, not simply those who were in the process of establishing one” (466). This statement underpins the selection of the WASP individual as the desired American individual in the new nation. In the following table, offered by Brown, we can observe the different regions of birth (477).

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TABLE II  
REGION OF BIRTH AND REGIONS REPRESENTED

Region of Birth	Region Represented							
	N. E.		Middle		South		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
New England	20	95	3	8	3	7	26	27
Middle	0	0	19	53	4	10	23	24
South	0	0	5	14	29	73	34	35
America	20	95	27	75	36	90	83	86
Europe	1	5	9	25	4	10	14	14
Totals	21	100	36	100	40	100	97	100

Therefore, we can assume that despite certain differences on different fields<sup>21</sup>, the Founding Fathers was a homogeneous group. However, the ambivalence of the document was paradoxically thought to secure the social, ideological, racial and economic future of the nation. The fact that the institution of slavery is not addressed, allowed to the use of subjection policies over immigrants, which was the basis of the agrarian economy in

<sup>21</sup> Brown asserts in *The Founding Fathers of 1776 and 1787: A Collective View* that “the members of the national elite of the Revolutionary era were, as befitted the variety of polities and economies they represented, a heterogeneous group” (473)

America, especially in the Southern states. These regions “would profit from transporting slaves from Africa as well as goods produced in America by slave labor” (Marshall 2).

In conclusion, the Founding Fathers belonged to a homogeneous group whose ancestry was deeply framed within the WASP figure. The American Revolution eventually triggered the independence of the 13 states and posterior creation of the United States. In the middle of a tumultuous period, Thomas Jefferson, alongside his colleagues, proclaimed the Declaration of Independence as an alleged movement endorsed for the “pursuit of happiness”.

By doing so, the Founding Fathers wanted to guarantee the union of the different states, needed to work together if they wanted to consolidate the viability of the new nation. This provided a reliable welfare scenario that could lead to the successful development of an embryonic nation. Did the Founding Fathers deliberately establish an exclusive society just to preserve the future of the American nation? Did they ever intend to establish a society based on equality and social inclusion? This will remain a mystery, so we can only elaborate conjectures based on social and historical evidence. However, the Declaration of Independence marks a turning point in American history, acting as a bridge from the Colonist revolution towards the endorsement of the American Constitution in 1787.

## Conclusion

Through this study I came to realize the importance of the genesis of the United States in order to comprehend the Trump Era. I have found this essay enlightening because I wanted to offer a different perspective towards Donald Trump's arrival. Far from the media spotlights, I wanted to analyze Trump as the result of a historical and cultural process. Aware of the limitations of such a wide scope, I believe that the results obtained from this work are positive. It has helped me to understand the "Donald Trump" phenomenon as a logical consequence of the foundations set during the American origin. However, the large extent of this essay limited a more thorough analysis. Among many fundamental texts that I had to cast aside, the American Constitution deserves a special mention because of its central relevance in terms of the country but also its individuals.

As I pointed out at the beginning of this essay, the American society of the Trump era is ruled by a series of ideological tenets based on Puritan beliefs. The mythological character of this journey has allowed to generate American consciousness as a reference for the rest of the mankind. Up to this point, John Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity" emerges as a fundamental cornerstone to understand American inspiration and sense of superiority.

Besides, the Puritan Mission propelled the assimilation of a specific social group: the WASPs. However, this community saw the hegemonic position in danger due to the existence of different communities, social and ethnic groups. Benjamin Franklin's "Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, & etc" was crucial in building awareness of the WASP identity, exhibiting an ideology based on American ethnocentrism and the supremacy of the WASPs.

However, the lack of autonomy due to colonial ties prevented the WASPs to emerge as the figurehead of an American society. WASPs needed a specific nation they could identify with. Therefore, the Declaration of Independence did not emerge as a document which protected human rights, freedom and individual liberties of the mankind, but the hegemony of a social group. It was created as an expression of protection and security to create a cohesive American society around the Puritan core.

Nowadays, the United States represents a self-made vast community, inhabited by people from multiple locations that have contributed to set a diverse cultural heritage, that existed in America since the origin of the nation. Nevertheless, Trump's victory symbolizes several cultural trends which are rooted in the creation of the American

society and nation. Donald Trump's regeneration of the country fosters once again an essentialist perspective, already stated by the main figures who propelled the emergence of the Nation, in which the white Anglo-Saxon protestant man prevails.

However, how does this ethnocentric vision of the country fit within the intrinsic American diversity? The heterogeneity and multiculturalism of this nation contrasts with the socio-political discoursed promulgated by the current President of the United States. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Hillary Clinton, the first woman to run for the presidency, or Obama, the first black President in American History symbolized a breath of fresh air in the middle of a very conservative nation. Trump seems to represent a logical response to these movements, as he represents a large part of the society that is reluctant to change and oppose to losing their status. He depicts a shift back to the embryonic United States and the re-emergence of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant man the American history stands for.

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